



# CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

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## ABSTRACT

India is a multi-ethnic and culturally diverse society that has witnessed conflicts arising from this ethnic and cultural diversity. This paper expounds such conceptual issues as ethnicity, cultural diversity and national integration. It is argued that national integration in the Indian context has been an attempt to establish "unity in diversity", seeking to wish away socio-cultural differences and imposing uniformity in spite of complex cultural diversity. This has created more conflict and posed obstacles to unity, peaceful coexistence, progress and stable development. It recommends that national integration and its benefits can be realized only with the development and entrenchment of a supportive public culture; understanding, respecting and tolerating differences occasioned by socio-cultural diversity; as well as the development of new institutions and mechanisms that address poverty, revenue allocation and other national issues peacefully.

**KEYWORDS:** Cultural Diversity, National Integration, Assimilation.

## INTRODUCTION

Culture is that which shapes us; it shapes our identity and influences our behavior. Culture is our "way of being," more specifically, it refers to the shared language, beliefs, values, norms, behaviors, and material objects that are passed down from one generation to the next. The term "culturally diverse" is often used interchangeably with the concept of "multiculturalism." Multiculturalism is defined as: "a system of beliefs and behaviors that *recognizes and respects* the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and *encourages* and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which *empowers* all within the organization or society. **Cultural diversity** is the quality of diverse or different cultures, as opposed to monoculture. It has a variety of meanings in different contexts, sometimes applying to cultural facts like music recordings or art works in museums, and sometimes applying to the variety of human cultures or traditions in a specific region, or in the world as a whole. It can also refer to the inclusion of different cultural perspectives in an organization or society.

Cultural diversity can be affected by political factors such as censorship or the protection of the rights of artists, and by economic factors such as free trade or protectionism in the market for cultural goods. Since the middle of the 20th century, there has been a concerted international effort to protect cultural diversity, involving the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and its member states. This involves action at international, national and local levels. Cultural diversity can also be promoted by individual citizens in the ways they choose to express or experience culture.

Sociologist Dr. Caleb Rosado, who specializes in diversity and multiculturalism, described seven important actions involved in the definition of multiculturalism:

- **recognition** of the abundant diversity of cultures;
- **respect** for the differences;
- **acknowledging** the validity of different cultural expressions and contributions;
- **valuing** what other cultures offer;
- **encouraging** the contribution of diverse groups;
- **empowering** people to strengthen themselves and others to achieve their maximum potential by being critical of their own biases; and
- **celebrating** rather than just tolerating the differences in order to bring about unity through diversity.

### National integration

National integration most simply and briefly means national unity. National Integration is the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. It is unity in diversity. It means unifying all the forces in the country so as to give the idea of one nation. National Integration involves, the sentiments of nationalism the feeling of oneness. Social, political, economic, linguistic and cultural unity, common ideas of life and common code of behaviour, the ability to subordinate sectarian and parochial loyalties to loyalty of the nation.

### Importance of National Integration

National Integration is the bond and togetherness between people regardless of their case, creed, religion or gender. It is the feeding of oneness, brotherhood and

social unity under communities and society in a country. National Integration helps to keep the country unified and strong from within despite the diversities. So, the importance of national integration can be from the fact that the nation which remains integrated. It will always progress on the track of development and prosperity. National Integration plays a dynamic role in making the country a one. This happens only by uniting every section of society. It provides an equal opportunity for each citizen. It also offers an equal platform in terms of social, cultural and economic development. National Integration also helps to unite the minorities as well as gives them the freedom to live their life in their way without any interference. Thus National Integration is also essential for the country's development. Because the country with national unity will always flourish and develop.

### Aims of National Integration

National Integration principally aims at providing a better environment for the people of a country. Thus they can develop themselves in all the aspects. It also aids to bind multi-racial and multilingual country like India, which has people with diverse culture and tradition. It also multiplies the union of brotherhood amongst communities, societies and the people. National Integration also helps in keeping the stability of a country and adds up to its whole development. It supports to nature communal harmony and fights casteism, regionalism, and linguism, etc. National Integration improves the feeling of loyalty and fraternity towards the nation. It unites the people in case of any national emergency.

### How to Promote National Integration

As national integration demonstrates a crucial part in the development of a country, it becomes important to develop the feeling of national integrity among its citizens. Therefore, focus on all the sections of society and making them financially dependent will promote national integration. This will help to promote economic integrity. This is one of the most important factors in promoting national integration. Tolerance and respect for other caste or religion also support to promote national integrity. Education, social and cultural unity, equality among people also helps to teach the feeling of national integration.

### Relationship between cultural diversity and integration

Cultural diversity helps to bring together different regions and cultures, and create a sense of unity among the people. It also helps to prevent conflicts and promote peace among different ethnic and religious groups. National integration is also important for fostering a sense of national pride and loyalty among citizens. We all know that the North East, a land of 8 states (including Sikkim), is a cultural mosaic of various ethnic groups having its own unique history, culture, languages/dialects, identity, religion, social customs, practices, etc. The people of north-east are always proud of their cultural heritage, as is wont with all ethnic communities of the world. What is worrisome and in fact a matter of great concern is that this unique cultural heritage/identity of the region has not even been partially, let alone fully, accepted/recognised by the rest of the country. For the last couple of years, the north-east is always in the news and hit the headlines. For all the wrong reasons, we have been hearing, experiencing, reading about hate crimes, racial discriminations committed against the north-east people in different parts of the country. Since the assimilationist demand is unjust, illiberal and unrealistic, many writers and political leaders have proposed integration as an alternative social goal.<sup>6</sup> Indeed it has now become a universally favoured model in the discourse on immigration. Although the term is widely used, it is rarely subjected to careful analysis. As a result, it lacks focus and conveys a

disparate body of ideas. It avoids the two extremes of assimilation and segregation, and seems to have caught on largely because of this negative virtue. Prima facie it appears to be a perfectly sensible goal, for no one wants individuals and groups to be excluded or marginalized. However when probed deeper, it is not as innocent as it seems. Unlike assimilation, integration is primarily a socio-political rather than a cultural concept. It implies that no individual or group of individuals should be excluded from society or treated as inferior, as was the case under racial segregation in the United States. However it involves far more than inclusion and equality. It implies that those included should be incorporated or integrated into the social structure so that they become an integral and indistinguishable part. In the integrationist view, a society is held together not by a single and homogeneous national culture but by a common body of institutions, values and practices. They structure social relations, ensure uniformity and predictability, facilitate the conduct of common affairs and create a shared moral order. While members of a society may organize their personal lives as they please, their shared social life requires and can only be sustained by such a widely accepted body of public institutions and norms of interpersonal behaviour, etc. In the integrationist view immigrants should integrate if they wish to be accepted and treated as equals.

The assimilationist approach makes important points. A society cannot be held together unless its members share certain basic beliefs and values in common. If some of them saw no value in human life, if they thought that all who refused to share their religious or political beliefs were fools or evil and should be suppressed, if they did not see the point of reciprocity and fairness and insisted on living in society on their own terms, or if they denied obvious facts about the social world and rejected the empirical and scientific mode of reasoning about them, no common life would be possible with them. It is also the case that as people live together, they develop similar habits, interests, tastes, etc., sometimes spontaneously and at other times out of self-interest or in response to subtle social pressure. The assimilationist, however, goes wrong in asking for a greater degree and range of unity than is possible or necessary. Human beings understand the world and their place in it in vastly different ways. Some are religious, others are not; the former belong to different religious traditions; and there is no rational way to resolve their disagreement. This is equally true of their moral differences. While we can hope to agree on some values, especially those that are central to any form of organized life, we cannot do so on others, such as the best way to lead the good life, ideals of human excellence, the structure of the family, and legitimate forms of sexual self-expression. Not surprisingly, almost every modern society displays and has to find ways of living with unresolved philosophical, cultural and moral differences. Since it has no cultural and moral consensus, it is not clear what immigrants are to be assimilated into, and what to do with the dissenting insiders. The assimilationist view bears no relation to contemporary reality and remains trapped in a dangerously naive nostalgia. Some assimilationists appreciate this, but insist on moulding immigrants into their own view of their society's idealized culture in the hope that this will help create a consensus around which to reorganize the rest of society. This is intellectually and morally dishonest, and is doomed to failure because immigrants are rarely willing and are in any case too small in number to play the regenerative, even redemptive, role

## CONCLUSION

There has been explored some of the important ways in which a common sense of belonging can be fostered in multicultural societies. It is concentrated on immigrants and showed how the diversity they bring need not pose intractable problems. Other forms of diversity can be similarly accommodated without standing in the way of a shared sense of community. Multicultural societies are not easy to manage, and there is no saying what external and internal factors might destabilize them. They are, however, here to stay, and form part of our historical predicament. Given good will on all sides, they can also become sources of great richness and vitality. If we mismanage or try to refashion them according to some nostalgic vision of a culturally homogeneous and tension-free society, they can easily become a nightmare. But we can make a reasonable success of them if we approach them with wisdom and confidence and are prepared to experiment with imaginative policies and institutional structures. Although Australia, Canada, India, Netherlands, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States have had their setbacks, they learned their lessons and provide reasonably good examples of more or less well-managed multicultural societies. Many other societies remain fractious, deeply divided, and caught up in suicidal policies. However they too are learning their lessons, and changing their ways. Their experiences understandably provoke despair just as those of successful societies offer grounds for hope.

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